

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers. Published by Ralph F. Cummings, Box 75, Fisherville, Mass., U. S. A.

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FIRST DIME NOVEL TO BE REPRINTED AFTER 69 YEARS

Dr. F. P. O'Brien's 30-Year Search for First Edition of 'Malaeska' Rewarded Yellow Cover To Be Kept

Frontier Thriller Was Written by Mrs. A. S. Stephens

Oct. 26, 1929

"Malaeska," the first dime novel printed in the United States, is to be retrieved from the obscurity of dusty attics and historical collections by its republication. Dr. Frank P. O'Brien, 418 West Forty-seventh Street, collector of Americana, asserted yesterday.

First of the "yellow-backs" which two generations of preachers and teachers condemned, the book will make its reappearance more than sixty-nine years after Irwin P. Beadle & Co. started to print the series.

"Elevating Sentiment" Was Object

"By the publishing of the series contemplated," read the publisher's "blurb" of 1860, "it is hoped reach all classes, old and young, male and female, in a manner at once to captivate and enliven—to answer to the popular demand for works of romance, but also to instill a pure and elevating sentiment in the hearts and minds of the people."

Under such a note, the volume written by Mrs. Ann S. Stephens was published, and despite the altruism of its announcement, it was the forerunner of a series which stern supervisors of the young believed dedicated to less lofty aims. The printings of the book

with its salmon-colored cover ran into the hundreds of thousands.

Almost before the ink was dry on its first edition the deluge of thrillers of frontier life was pouring from the presses. And for more than a generation teachers could never tell whether Johnny was really interested in the geography he appeared to be studying so intently or whether its ample leaves concealed a blood-and-thunder tale.

Searched Thirty Years for Original

Dr. O'Brien's decision to revive "Malaeska" follows his discovery of a first edition copy of the book after a search of nearly thirty years, taking him to almost as many states. In 1907 he found a reprint copy of the book in a basement of M. J. Ivers & Co., the publishing house that purchased the supplies and rights of the earlier firm, Beadle & Co.

A few months ago Dr. O'Brien obtained the first copy of a first edition in an attic of an old house in Ulster County, and he determined to have it reprinted because he regarded it as an analysis of the Indian character and psychology in the red man's first contacts with the Caucasian.

"Despite the fact that it was the first dime novel, 'Malaeska,' or as its complete title reads, 'Malaeska, the Indian Wife of the White Hunter,' is not blood-and-thunder stuff," said Dr. O'Brien yesterday. "Mrs. Stephens, its author, was editor of the eminently respectable 'Ladies Companion,' and later of 'The Ladies World.' When she visited Europe about the middle of the century she was acclaimed by Thac-

keray and Dickens and was entertained by royalty. She wrote 'The Old Homestead,' which George L. Aiken dramatized and played in 1856, although that fact is not generally known. The play, of course, is well known, for Denman Thompson revived it in the 80's and played it successfully for almost forty years.

"'Malaeska' has only one battle scene, a conflict between the Indians and the settlers in early New York. It was, as its forward said, 'American in all its features.' It may have been the principal origin of our keen interest in American pioneers and the winning of the West.

White Hunter's Death Described

"The scene in which the white hunter dies in the arms of his Indian wife is one of the book's more mellow passages," Dr. O'Brien continued.

This scene reads follows:

"The moon arose and the dense shadow of a hemlock beneath which he (the hunter) had fallen lay within a few feet of him like the wing of a great bird swayer slowly forward with an imperceptible but certain progress. The eyes of the dying man were fixed on the shadow with a keen intense gaze. There was something terrible in its stealthy and silent advance and he strove to elude it as if it had been a living thing; but with every motion the blood gushed afresh from his heart and he fell back on the sod, his white teeth clenched with pain, his hands clutched deep in the damp moss.

"Still his keen eyes glittered in the moonlight with the fevered working of pain and imagination. The shadow on which they turned was no shadow, but a nest of serpents creeping with their insidious coils toward him; and again a pall, a black funereal pall, dragged forward by invisible spirits to shut him out from the light forever.

"Slowly and surely it crept across his damp forehead and over his glassy eyes. His teeth unclenched, his hands relaxed, a gentle smile broke over his pale face when he felt with what a spirit-like touch it visited him.

"Just then a human shadow mingled with the tree and the wail of a child broke the still night air. The dying hunter struggled and strove to cry out 'Malaeska-Ma-Ma-Mala.' The

poor Indian girl heard the voice, half of frenzied joy, half fear, and sprang to his aide.

"She flung her child in the grass and lifted her dying husband to her heart and kissed his damp forehead in a wild eager agony of sorrow. 'Malaeska,' said the poor young man, striving to wind his arms about her, 'my poor girl, what will become of my boy?'"

Thus was born the first of what Dr. O'Brien terms "the mighty line of little volumes which later became quite unjustly anathema to preachers and stern parents." In reprinting the volume, which the John Day Co. will bring out next week, Dr. O'Brien has insisted that tradition be revised. The paper wrapper around the covers will be of a shade which the publishers of Civil War days termed "salmon colored," but which indignant parents called "yellow back."

ZANE GREY DIES OF HEART ATTACK

Writer of Westerns Succumbs at 64
in His California Home

New York Post

Altadena, Cal., Oct. 23, 1939 (AP) Zane Grey, writer and sportsman, died suddenly at his home today of a heart attack. He was sixty-four.

Sold 20,000,000 Books

Zane Grey, author of fifty books which have sold more than 20,000,000 copies, drew on the history of his own family for his first book, "Betty Zane," a tale of the settling of the Ohio country.

His great-grandfather was Colonel Ebenezer Zane, Danish exile who crossed the Atlantic with William Penn. Colonel Zane's wife was part Indian, and thier four sons and daughter all won recognition during the Revolution.

Grey was the son of a backwoodsman, who later became a preacher and finally a doctor.

He was born in Zanesville, Ohio, named for his family, on January 31, 1875 and was graduated in dentistry from the University of Pennsylvania in 1896. He played some professional baseball for a brother's team after getting out of school, but practiced little dentistry.

He came to New York after graduation and lived lean years while he was trying to set up practice on the money made during the summers as a baseball player.

We hear that Edwin Sissung of Coopersberg, Penna. Novel Trader is going to be married soon. Good luck to you from Reckless Ralph and all the members of Happy Hours Brotherhood.

GETS FATHER'S AIDE

Fred Lane, who was property man for Maurice Tournear seventeen years ago, when that noted director made "Never the Twain Shall Meet," with Anita Stewart and Bert Lytell, in Tahiti, is working in the same capacity for Tournear's son, Jacques, who is directing "Nick Carter," his first feature picture, at the Metro-Goldwyn-Maver. At the suggestion of his father, who is in France, Jacques asked that Freddie be assigned to the picture for good luck.

TAKE YOUR PICK

"Edwin Drood," mystery story Charles Dickens, left unfinished when he died in 1870, has had more than 450 conclusions written for it.

NEWS

Watch out for three articles by Gilbert Patten in the Jan., Feb., and March, issues of Athletes Magazine, Published by Street & Smith. You may find them very interesting.

Charlie Austin misses Old Philadelphia, where he was born and brought up. He was down to the Hospital last Sunday to see Wm. J. Benners and Ye Publisher of The Round-Up.

WANT—

Golden Days and Happy Days if price is reasonable. Will not pay exorbitant price. Have bound volumes Youths Companion. Several runs unbound for sale. Also some books on the west, true, not fiction.

J. D. HARDIN

634 Broad St. Burlington, N. C.

Arthur Pforzheimer, rare book dealer at 26 East 56th Street, is now showing an exhibit of miniature books which will be on display through January. The smallest book in the collection is a manuscript of "The Night Before Christmas," measuring $\frac{1}{8}$ by 5-32 inches.

Lacy Irwin, Kane, Ill., is with us again.

WANTED

The Weekly Story Teller, published by Norman L. Munro for 1874-75.

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Write—

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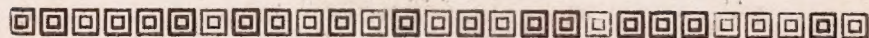
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